



The Role of Employee Engagement and Talent Development in Shaping Sustainable Human Resource Practices

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Information of Article

Article history:

Received: 14 Sep 2024

Accepted: 29 Oct 2024

Available online: 30 Oct 2024

Keywords:

Employee Engagement

Talent Development

Sustainable Human Resource Practices

ABSTRACT

Employee engagement and talent development are critical drivers of organizational sustainability, particularly in the context of modern human resource management (HRM). This study explores the role of employee engagement and talent development in shaping sustainable HR practices, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of how these elements contribute to long-term organizational performance and resilience. Grounded in qualitative methodologies, this research employs semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and employees across diverse industries to gather rich, contextual insights. Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes, including the impact of employee engagement on organizational sustainability, the effectiveness of talent development initiatives, and the interplay between these practices and sustainable HR strategies. The findings reveal that employee engagement mediates the relationship between sustainable HR practices and organizational performance, while targeted talent development programs enhance workforce adaptability, innovation, and retention.

1. Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) has evolved significantly in recent years, with increasing emphasis on integrating sustainable practices into organizational strategies. Central to this evolution are employee engagement and talent development, which are now recognized as critical drivers of sustainable human resource management (HRM). Employee engagement is a well-established factor influencing job performance, retention, and overall organizational productivity. Alghnimia et al. (2020) argue that engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to organizational goals, especially when aligned with sustainable practices. Similarly, talent development practices focus on aligning employee skills and competencies with long-term organizational objectives, fostering a workforce capable of navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing business environment (Morethe et al., 2020). Together, these elements form the foundation for sustainable HRM, which emphasizes long-term value creation by integrating strategic human capital management with sustainability goals (Ababneh, 2021).

The existing body of literature highlights various dimensions of these interconnections. For example, Mishra (2024) emphasized that HR practices designed to enhance retention and development foster higher levels of employee engagement, which in turn contribute to organizational sustainability. Palupiningtyas (2024) explored the role of Green HRM strategies in embedding sustainability into engagement and talent development frameworks, underscoring the necessity of aligning HR strategies with environmental and organizational goals. These studies collectively underscore the growing importance of understanding the interplay between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainability in HRM practices. Despite these insights, research in this area remains fragmented. Most studies examine employee engagement and talent development as isolated factors, rather than exploring their combined impact on sustainable HR practices. For instance, while Morethe et al. (2020) highlighted the predictive role of talent development in enhancing engagement, Peretz (2024) argued that national culture plays a significant role in shaping sustainable HR practices, pointing to the need for contextual understanding. Furthermore, the role of Green HRM and employee psychological well-being in fostering sustainable HRM practices remains underexplored (Rahi, 2021; Ababneh, 2021). These gaps indicate a critical need for integrative research that examines how employee engagement and talent development interact to shape sustainable HR frameworks.

Despite the increasing recognition of employee engagement and talent development as essential components of sustainable HRM, there is limited understanding of how these factors interact to drive sustainability in practice. While existing studies have explored the individual impacts of engagement and development, they often fail to address their interplay within a comprehensive framework. For instance, Ababneh (2021) discussed how Green HRM practices influence employee behaviors, yet the mechanisms through which talent development enhances engagement in sustainable HR practices remain unclear. Similarly, while Alghnimia et al. (2020) identified engagement as a mediator in the relationship between HRM practices and job performance, the nuanced dynamics between engagement and talent development in fostering sustainability have yet to be adequately explored. This research gap highlights the need for a

deeper understanding of the synergy between these elements and their role in achieving sustainable HR outcomes. This study aims to explore the role of employee engagement and talent development in shaping sustainable HRM practices. By focusing on how these elements interact, the research seeks to identify strategies that enhance both employee and organizational outcomes in a sustainable manner.

The specific objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to examine the influence of employee engagement on the adoption and implementation of sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. Second, it seeks to investigate the role of talent development in fostering employee engagement within sustainable HR frameworks. Finally, the study endeavors to identify integrative strategies that align employee engagement and talent development to enhance sustainability in HR practices. In line with these objectives, the research is guided by the following questions: How does employee engagement influence sustainable HRM practices? What is the role of talent development in fostering employee engagement within sustainable HR frameworks? Additionally, how can organizations integrate employee engagement and talent development to achieve sustainable HR outcomes? Understanding the interplay between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HRM practices is vital for organizations aiming to achieve long-term sustainability. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to the theoretical development of sustainable HRM while providing practical insights for HR practitioners and policymakers. The findings of this research are expected to guide organizations in designing HR strategies that align employee engagement and talent development with sustainability goals, ultimately enhancing employee satisfaction, retention, and organizational performance. This research also responds to broader global challenges such as environmental sustainability, workforce adaptability, and resilience in the face of rapid change. Palupiningtyas (2024) and Mishra (2024) highlighted the critical need for Green HRM and sustainable talent management strategies in fostering organizational resilience. By integrating these perspectives, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on the strategic role of HRM in sustainability, offering a framework for organizations to achieve sustainable growth while maintaining employee well-being. Through its focus on the synergy between employee engagement and talent development, this study aims to empower organizations with actionable strategies for fostering sustainable HRM practices, making a significant contribution to both academic literature and practical implementation in the field of HR.

2. Literature Review

The role of employee engagement and talent development in fostering sustainable HRM practices can be understood through several theoretical lenses and models. Among these, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a strong foundation for understanding how employee engagement arises from reciprocal relationships between employees and their organizations. According to SET, when organizations invest in talent development and create supportive environments, employees are more likely to respond with higher levels of engagement, commitment, and performance (Rahi, 2021; Alghnimia et al., 2020). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model further explains how job resources, such as training opportunities and supportive HR practices, contribute to employee engagement by buffering the negative effects of job demands and enhancing motivation (Ababneh, 2021). In the context of sustainable HRM, the Green HRM Framework emphasizes the alignment of HR practices with environmental goals, highlighting strategies such as green talent management and employee engagement with sustainability initiatives (Palupiningtyas, 2024; Umair et al., 2024). This framework integrates the principles of sustainability into HRM practices, focusing on reducing environmental impact while fostering employee well-being and engagement. Similarly, the Strategic HRM Model underscores the importance of aligning HR practices with broader organizational goals, including sustainability, as a means to drive both employee and organizational outcomes (Brez & Jaradat, 2024). Collectively, these theories and frameworks offer insights into how employee engagement and talent development interact to shape sustainable HR practices. They emphasize the need for strategic alignment between individual and organizational goals, particularly in the context of sustainability.

Several qualitative studies have explored the dynamics of employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HRM. Morethe et al. (2020) conducted a study on HR professionals, revealing that talent development practices significantly predict employee engagement. Their findings emphasized the role of professional growth opportunities in fostering a motivated and engaged workforce. Similarly, Ababneh (2021) examined how Green HRM practices influence employees' green behaviors, identifying employee engagement as a key mediating factor. These studies highlight the centrality of engagement in translating HR practices into desired employee outcomes. Palupiningtyas (2024) explored the intersection of Green HRM strategies and employee engagement, emphasizing the importance of aligning environmental initiatives with employee development programs. Their findings suggested that sustainable talent management not only enhances employee engagement but also drives organizational sustainability. Additionally, Mishra (2024) highlighted the role of HR practices in enhancing employee retention and engagement in global contexts, emphasizing the need for culturally adaptable strategies. While these studies provide valuable insights, they primarily focus on individual components of sustainable HRM, such as engagement or talent development, without examining their combined impact. For instance, Rahi (2021) explored the role of psychological well-being in work engagement, but the study did not consider the role of talent development in fostering such well-being. Similarly, Alghnimia et al. (2020) demonstrated the mediating role of engagement between HRM practices and job performance but did not explore how talent development could enhance this relationship.

Despite the growing body of research on employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HRM, several gaps remain. First, while many studies examine employee engagement and talent development as individual constructs, few

have explored their combined impact on sustainable HR practices. For example, Morethe et al. (2020) focused on talent development's role in engagement but did not investigate how this interaction contributes to sustainability. Similarly, Palupiningtyas (2024) explored Green HRM's impact on engagement but did not examine the integration of talent development into these practices. Second, there is limited qualitative research that provides in-depth insights into the lived experiences of employees and HR professionals regarding sustainable HRM practices. While quantitative studies have identified correlations between engagement and sustainability (Ababneh, 2021), qualitative research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that drive these relationships. For instance, how do employees perceive the role of talent development in fostering engagement? How do organizations operationalize sustainable HR practices through engagement and development strategies? These questions remain largely unanswered in the existing literature.

Finally, the role of contextual factors, such as organizational culture and industry-specific challenges, in shaping the relationship between engagement, talent development, and sustainability is underexplored. Peretz (2024) emphasized the influence of national culture on sustainable HRM practices, suggesting the need for more research that considers cultural and contextual variations. Addressing these gaps is critical for advancing both the theoretical and practical understanding of sustainable HRM. By exploring the interplay between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainability through qualitative inquiry, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework that bridges existing gaps in the literature. This approach not only contributes to academic scholarship but also offers actionable insights for HR professionals seeking to align engagement and talent development with sustainability goals.

3. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study to explore the nuanced and complex relationship between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HRM practices. This approach is well-suited for capturing in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences and perceptions, which are critical to understanding the phenomena under investigation. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on measurable variables, qualitative research allows for a rich exploration of context and meaning, making it particularly relevant for this study's exploratory nature. The chosen research design is phenomenology, which focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences related to the research topic. Phenomenology enables the researcher to delve deeply into how HR professionals, managers, and employees perceive and experience the role of engagement and talent development in fostering sustainability in HR practices. This design provides a framework for uncovering the essence of these experiences, offering a meaningful understanding of the dynamics at play.

The study will include 15 to 20 participants, comprising HR professionals, managers, and employees from organizations that have implemented sustainable HRM practices. A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to ensure that participants are selected based on their direct experience and relevance to the study. This targeted approach allows for the collection of rich, detailed data from individuals who are knowledgeable about the interplay between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HR practices. Additionally, snowball sampling will be utilized to recruit participants who may not be directly accessible but have unique insights into sustainable HRM frameworks. Efforts will be made to ensure diversity in participant demographics, including gender, age, job roles, and industry sectors. This diversity is critical to capturing a wide range of perspectives and experiences, thereby enhancing the study's depth and validity.

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, which provide a flexible yet systematic approach to exploring participants' experiences and perspectives. Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended responses, enabling participants to elaborate on their insights while ensuring that key themes related to employee engagement, talent development, and sustainability are addressed. An interview guide will be developed to provide consistency across interviews, covering topics such as the strategies used to enhance employee engagement, the integration of talent development with sustainable HR practices, and the perceived impact of these efforts on organizational outcomes. The interviews will be conducted either in person or via virtual platforms, depending on participants' availability and preferences. Each interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate data collection. In addition to recordings, field notes will be taken during the interviews to capture contextual details and initial impressions. Before each interview, participants will receive an information sheet outlining the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical safeguards, and they will be required to sign a consent form.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the collected data. This method is particularly appropriate for qualitative studies as it allows the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, the analysis will begin with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts. Next, initial codes will be generated to highlight significant excerpts of the data. These codes will then be organized into broader themes that align with the study's research questions, such as the influence of employee engagement on sustainable HR practices or the role of talent development in fostering engagement. Once themes are identified, they will be reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the data and provide meaningful insights. Each theme will then be defined and supported with illustrative quotes from participants. This structured yet flexible process ensures that the analysis is

grounded in the data while providing a clear narrative that addresses the study's objectives. The use of thematic analysis is justified as it enables the researcher to capture complex and context-specific phenomena in a systematic manner.

Ethical considerations are integral to this study to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant prior to their involvement. Participants will receive a detailed information sheet outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written consent forms will be signed before the interviews begin. To maintain confidentiality, all data will be anonymized, and pseudonyms will be used in transcripts and any published findings. Identifiable information will be stored securely and separately from the main data. Only the researcher will have access to this information. The study will also adhere to all institutional ethical guidelines and obtain approval from the relevant ethics committee before data collection begins. These measures ensure that the study is conducted with integrity and respect for participants' rights and well-being. By adhering to these ethical principles, the study aims to foster trust with participants and uphold the highest standards of research practice.

4. Findings

Through thematic analysis, the findings revealed key themes that highlight the interplay between employee engagement, talent development, and sustainable HR practices. Each theme is supported by sub-themes, which provide a nuanced understanding of the data.

4.1 Employee Engagement as a Driver of Sustainability

The first theme as illustrated in figure1, emphasizes the critical role of employee engagement in driving sustainable HR practices. One sub-theme that emerged is the alignment with organizational sustainability goals, where participants shared how their engagement is heightened when their personal values align with the company's commitment to sustainability. This alignment fosters a sense of shared purpose and intrinsic motivation. Another sub-theme, motivation through recognition, highlights the importance of acknowledging employees' contributions to sustainability efforts. Participants described how recognition, whether formal or informal, serves as a powerful reinforcement mechanism. Additionally, impact of transparent communication emerged as a key sub-theme, with participants emphasizing the role of clear and open communication about sustainability goals in fostering trust and engagement. Finally, engagement through participation captures how employees feel more connected to their work when they actively participate in sustainability initiatives, seeing the tangible outcomes of their efforts.

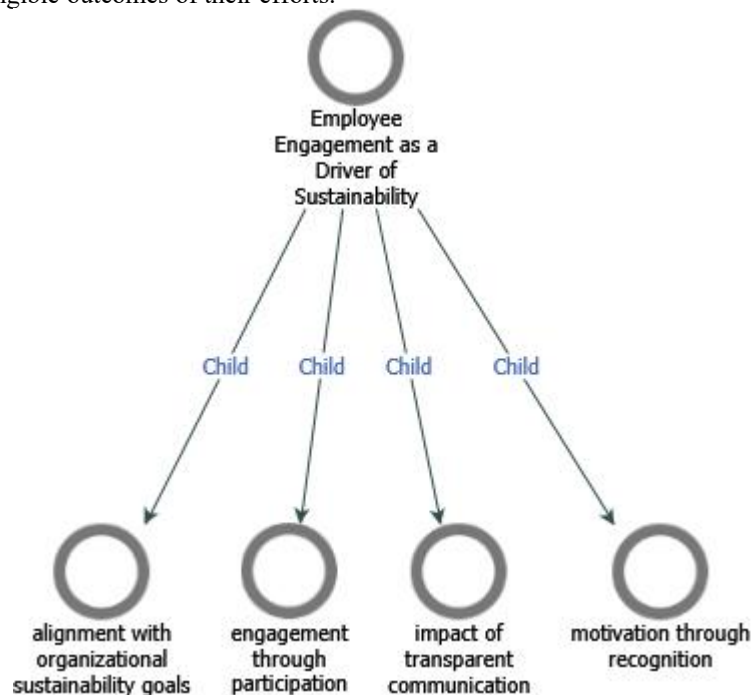


Figure:1 Employee Engagement as a Driver of Sustainability

4.2 Talent Development as a Catalyst for Engagement

The second theme as illustrated in figure2, focuses on the role of talent development in fostering employee engagement. The sub-theme sustainability-focused training programs highlights how targeted training equips employees with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to green initiatives. Participants shared how these programs not only enhance their professional capabilities but also deepen their connection to organizational goals. Opportunities for leadership development emerged as another sub-theme, with participants reflecting on how taking leadership roles in sustainability projects fosters a sense of ownership and pride. Customized career growth paths was identified as a third sub-theme,

showcasing the importance of aligning employees' career aspirations with organizational sustainability objectives. Finally, the sub-theme mentorship and support systems underscores the role of guidance and peer support in helping employees effectively engage with sustainability practices.

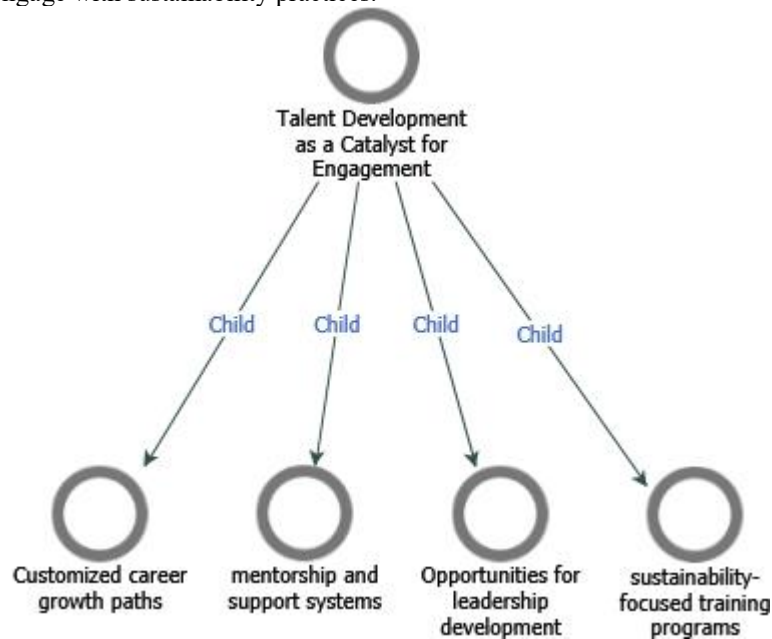


Figure:2 Talent Development as a Catalyst for Engagement

4.3 Integration of Engagement and Talent Development into Sustainable HR Practices

The third theme as illustrated in figure3, explores how engagement and talent development are integrated into sustainable HRM practices. The sub-theme collaborative sustainability projects highlights the value of teamwork and shared responsibility in achieving sustainability goals. Participants described how working on team-based projects creates a sense of community and unity. Strategic alignment of HR policies emerged as another sub-theme, emphasizing the role of policies such as green recruitment and sustainability-focused training in embedding sustainability into organizational culture. Retention strategies centered on engagement was also a significant sub-theme, with participants discussing how meaningful work assignments and flexible working conditions contribute to talent retention. Finally, the sub-theme employee empowerment in green decision-making reflects how involving employees in sustainability-related decisions fosters agency and strengthens their connection to organizational objectives.

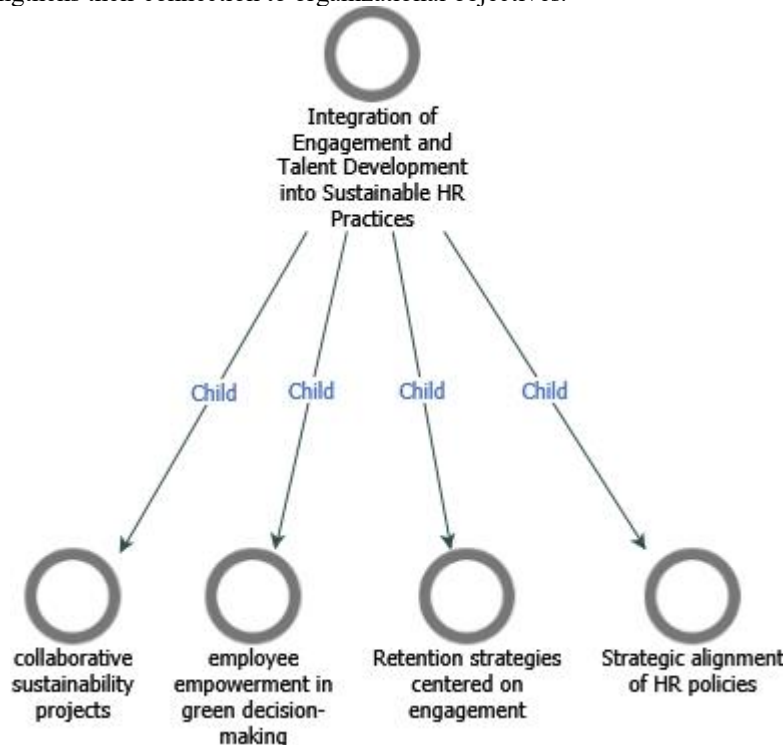


Figure:3 Integration of Engagement and Talent Development into Sustainable HR Practices

4.4 Barriers and Challenges to Sustainable HR Practices

An additional theme as illustrated in figure4 that emerged during the analysis is the barriers organizations face in implementing sustainable HR practices. The sub-theme resource constraints highlights the challenges posed by limited budgets and resources, which often hinder the execution of sustainability initiatives. Another sub-theme, resistance to change, describes how employee and leadership reluctance can impede the adoption of new practices. Lack of awareness and training was identified as a further sub-theme, with participants noting that insufficient education on sustainability concepts limits employee contributions. Lastly, the sub-theme balancing short-term goals with long-term sustainability reflects the tension organizations face in prioritizing immediate performance metrics over sustainability objectives.

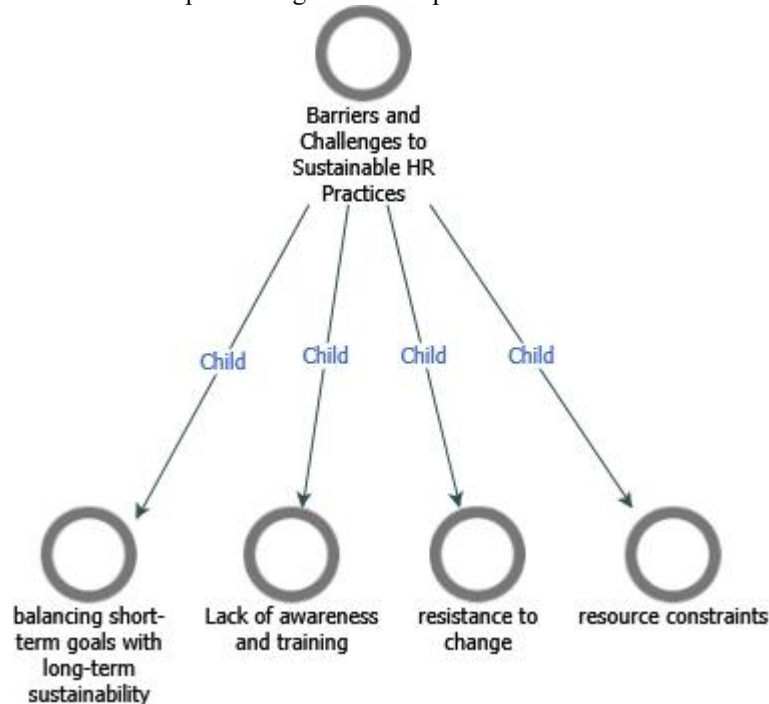


Figure:4 Barriers and Challenges to Sustainable HR Practices

The findings reveal that employee engagement and talent development are essential drivers of sustainable HR practices, and their integration can transform organizational culture and performance. Participants' experiences illustrate that engagement is most effective when aligned with personal values, recognized through consistent feedback, and supported by transparent communication. Employees feel more invested when they participate in sustainability projects, particularly when these initiatives align with their intrinsic motivations and offer tangible outcomes. Talent development serves as a catalyst for engagement by equipping employees with the skills and leadership opportunities needed to contribute meaningfully to sustainability efforts. Training programs and tailored development plans allow employees to see how their professional growth aligns with organizational objectives. Additionally, mentorship and leadership opportunities empower employees to take ownership of sustainability projects, reinforcing their commitment to both personal and organizational success.

The integration of engagement and talent development into sustainable HR practices creates a cohesive framework for driving sustainability. Collaborative projects foster a sense of unity and shared purpose, while strategic HR policies ensure that sustainability is embedded into everyday practices. Retention strategies that prioritize employee satisfaction and flexibility further enhance the sustainability of HR efforts. However, the barriers identified—such as resource constraints, resistance to change, and lack of awareness—highlight the need for organizations to address these challenges to fully realize the potential of sustainable HR practices. Overall, these findings provide actionable insights for organizations aiming to foster a culture of sustainability. By aligning engagement and talent development with strategic HR policies, companies can not only enhance employee satisfaction and retention but also contribute to long-term organizational sustainability. These findings also underscore the importance of addressing contextual challenges and adopting a holistic approach to sustainable HRM.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of employee engagement and talent development in shaping sustainable HR practices, addressing the research questions and objectives. For the first research question, "How does employee engagement influence sustainable HRM practices?", the findings revealed that engagement serves as a crucial driver of sustainability. Subthemes such as alignment with organizational sustainability goals, engagement through participation, transparent communication, and motivation through recognition demonstrated that employees are more

engaged when their values align with the organization's goals, when they actively participate in sustainability initiatives, and when their contributions are acknowledged. These findings highlight that employee engagement is not merely a byproduct of sustainable practices but a deliberate driver of sustainability outcomes.

The second research question, "What is the role of talent development in fostering employee engagement within sustainable HR frameworks?", was addressed through themes emphasizing the catalytic role of talent development. Training programs on sustainability practices and opportunities for leadership development emerged as key mechanisms for enhancing engagement. By equipping employees with the necessary skills and providing them with leadership opportunities, organizations can create a workforce that is both motivated and capable of contributing to sustainability. Finally, the third research question, "How can organizations integrate employee engagement and talent development to achieve sustainable HR outcomes?", was addressed through the findings on collaborative sustainability projects, strategic HR policies, and retention strategies. The integration of these elements fosters a cohesive and sustainable HR framework, highlighting the importance of aligning engagement and development with organizational sustainability goals.

The findings align with and extend the existing literature on sustainable HR practices. Prior studies, such as those by Alghnima et al. (2020) and Mishra (2024), highlighted the mediating role of employee engagement in translating HRM practices into job performance and retention. Similarly, this study confirmed that engagement is a critical link between HR practices and sustainable outcomes, emphasizing the importance of alignment, participation, and recognition as engagement drivers. The findings also resonate with Palupiningtyas (2024) and Ababneh (2021), who discussed the role of Green HRM in fostering sustainability. This study builds on their work by highlighting the integration of talent development as a complementary mechanism for driving engagement. The subtheme of training programs on sustainability aligns with the findings of Morethe et al. (2020), who identified professional growth opportunities as a predictor of engagement.

However, this study also reveals gaps in the existing literature. For example, while previous research, such as Peretz (2024), emphasized cultural factors in sustainable HRM, this study focuses on the organizational mechanisms that drive engagement and sustainability, providing actionable insights for HR professionals. Additionally, the barriers and challenges identified in this study, such as resource constraints and resistance to change, add a new dimension to the understanding of sustainable HR practices, which has been less explored in prior research.

The findings of this study carry significant practical, theoretical, and policy implications. From a practical perspective, organizations can enhance employee engagement and talent development by aligning personal and organizational sustainability goals. This can be achieved through initiatives such as providing training on green practices and fostering collaboration via team-based projects. Additionally, recognizing and rewarding employee contributions to sustainability initiatives can further strengthen engagement and motivation, thereby driving organizational commitment to sustainable practices. In terms of theoretical implications, this study advances the understanding of sustainable HRM by integrating employee engagement and talent development as complementary drivers of sustainability. It extends existing frameworks, such as the Green HRM model, by highlighting the critical role of development opportunities and leadership initiatives in fostering engagement and promoting sustainable HR outcomes. For policy implications, the findings suggest that policymakers and organizational leaders should prioritize sustainable HR policies that explicitly integrate engagement and talent development strategies. Policies should focus on encouraging employee participation in sustainability projects, offering targeted training opportunities, and aligning recruitment and retention strategies with broader sustainability goals. Such policies can serve as a foundation for long-term organizational success and sustainable development.

This study has several strengths that contribute to its value. The use of a qualitative, phenomenological design allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, providing rich and nuanced insights into the interplay between engagement, development, and sustainability. The thematic analysis ensured a structured yet flexible approach to identifying patterns within the data, enhancing the study's rigor. However, the study also has limitations. The sample size, while adequate for qualitative research, may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the focus on specific organizational contexts means that the findings may not fully capture variations across industries or cultural settings. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a larger and more diverse sample and exploring the role of contextual factors in shaping sustainable HR practices.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the role of employee engagement and talent development in shaping sustainable HRM practices. The findings revealed that employee engagement serves as a critical driver of sustainability when employees' personal values align with organizational goals, and when they actively participate in sustainability initiatives. Recognition and transparent communication further enhance engagement by reinforcing employees' commitment to sustainability. Talent development emerged as a complementary catalyst for engagement, with sustainability-focused training programs and leadership opportunities playing pivotal roles in fostering a motivated and capable workforce. Finally, the integration of engagement and talent development into sustainable HR policies, such as collaborative projects and strategic HR frameworks, was identified as essential for achieving long-term organizational sustainability. However, challenges such as resource constraints, resistance to change, and lack of awareness were noted as barriers that organizations must address to fully realize sustainable HRM practices.

This study makes several important contributions to the field of HRM and sustainability. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of sustainable HRM by demonstrating how employee engagement and talent development interact to drive sustainability outcomes. It extends existing frameworks, such as Green HRM and strategic HRM models, by emphasizing the role of development opportunities and leadership initiatives in fostering engagement. By highlighting the integration of these elements into HR policies, the study provides a holistic framework for understanding sustainable HRM. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for HR professionals seeking to align sustainability goals with engagement and development strategies. The study highlights the importance of creating alignment between personal and organizational sustainability goals, recognizing contributions, and providing targeted training and leadership opportunities. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable HR practices and offer a roadmap for organizations aiming to achieve long-term sustainability.

While this study provides valuable insights, it also highlights areas for future research. First, future studies could expand the sample size and include participants from diverse industries and cultural contexts to explore how these factors influence the dynamics of engagement, development, and sustainability. Comparative studies across industries or cultural settings could provide a deeper understanding of how contextual factors shape sustainable HRM practices. Second, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of integrating engagement and talent development strategies on organizational sustainability outcomes. Such studies could provide evidence of causal relationships and identify the conditions under which these strategies are most effective. Finally, future research could explore the role of technology in enhancing engagement and development for sustainability. For example, the use of HR analytics, virtual training platforms, and digital recognition tools could be investigated as enablers of sustainable HR practices. By addressing these areas, future research can further advance the understanding of sustainable HRM and its implications for organizations, employees, and society.

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